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## Viewing cable 06KABUL1281, KARZAI PROPOSES NEW CABINET

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06KABUL1281**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06KABUL1281</a>	<a href="#">2006-03-23 17:58</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Kabul</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.aftenposten.no/spesial/wikileaksdokumenter/article3992271.ece>

VZCZCXRO5794  
PP RUEHDBU  
DE RUEHBUL #1281/01 0821758  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 231758Z MAR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9098  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 5712  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFISS/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEATRS/US TREASURY WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 001281

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/FO AMBASSADOR QUINN, S/CT, SA/A, G KATE

FRIEDRICH, G/IWI CHARLOTTE PONTICELLI AND DIANNE GRAHAM

NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND

CENTCOM FOR POLAD, CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76

TREASURY FOR LMCDONALD, WBALDRIDGE, APARAMESWARAN, ABAUKOL

STATE PLEASE PASS USAID

USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/23/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: KARZAI PROPOSES NEW CABINET

KABUL 00001281 001.2 OF 004

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES RICHARD NORLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. On March 22, President Karzai presented his new Cabinet to Parliament for approval. The new Cabinet does not represent a significant departure from the previous one. The most important change was the replacement of Dr. Abdullah as Foreign Minister with Karzai advisor Dr. Spanta. Other key Ministers - including Minister of Defense Wardak, Minister of Finance Ahadi, and acting Minister of Interior Zarar - will remain in place pending approval by Parliament. The new Ministers announced are largely unknown, both to Afghans and the international community. Parliament will begin the process of calling Ministers in for questioning on Saturday, March 25. Parliamentary approval of the Cabinet could take several weeks. END SUMMARY.

Who's In

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¶2. (U) New Ministers:

Minister of Foreign Affairs - Rangin Dadfar Spanta (current Karzai advisor)

Minister of Commerce - Dr. Mohammad Haidar Reza (current Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Minister of Women - Dr. Suraya Rahim Sabrang (former Deputy Minister in 2004)

Minister of Transport and Aviation - Gul Hussein Ahmad

Minister of Rural Development - Ehsan Zia (current Deputy Minister)

Minister of Mines - Engineer Ibrahim Adel (current Deputy

Minister of Refugees - Ustad Akbar Akbar

Ministers Changing Portfolio:

Minister of Education - former Minister of Rural Development Haneef Atmar

Minister of Disabled and Social Affairs - former Minister of Education Noor Mohammad Qarqeen

Minister of Higher Education - former Minister of Refugees Mohammad Azam Dadfar

Unchanged:

Acting Minister of Interior Zarar Ahmad Muqbal was nominated Minister

Minister of Defense Rahim Wardak

Minister of Finance Anwar ul-Haq Ahadi

Minister of Energy Ismail Khan

Minister of Justice Sarwar Danesh

Minister of Counternarcotics Engineer Habibullah Qaderi

Minister of Economy Amin Farhang

Minister of Communication Amirzai Sangin

Minister of Urban Development Yusuf Pashtoon

Minister of Public Works Dr. Suhrab Ali Safari

Minister of Youth and Culture Dr. Makhdoom Raheem

Minister of Health Dr. Amin Fatemi

Minister of Religious Affairs Nematollah Shahrani

Minister of Tribal and Border Affairs Abdul Karim Brahawi

Minister of Agriculture Obaidullah Ramin

¶2. (C) The newly nominated Ministers are a group of relative unknowns (see bio information and analysis beginning para 8), a move likely made in an attempt to ease their confirmation by Parliament. Initial reports indicate that the new group is made of competent professionals, although their relative youth and inexperience may hamper them politically. The

Ministers retained in their positions or moved to a new Ministry include many who have a positive reputation with the international community, such as Minister Atmar (widely respected for his effective leadership at Rural Development). The retaining of Zarar in MOI was significant, as his position was sought by many. (Comment: Zarar has yet to prove himself as a decisive Minister capable of tackling tough issues, but Embassy engagement with him as Acting Minister has found him to be generally forthcoming and supportive.) President Karzai's affirmation of Minister of Finance Ahadi's tenure as Finance Minister was widely anticipated by GoA contacts and foreign advisors and is favorable to U.S. and broad international donor community interests. The retention of others, such as Minister Dadfar, is more surprising, given reports of poor management and accusations of corruption, and demonstrates that the list ultimately reflects political realities and perceived loyalty to Karzai rather than management skill. The new list leaves only one true "warlord" - Ismail Khan - in the Cabinet.

#### Who's Out

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#### 13. (U) Ministers removed:

Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah  
Minister of Commerce Amin Arsala became "Senior Minister"  
Minister of Transport Enayatullah Qasemi (US citizen, under required age for Minister)  
Minister of Women Massouda Jalal  
Minister of Mines and Heavy Industry Engineer Mohammad Sediq (US citizen)  
Minister of Higher Education Sayed Amir Shah Hassanyar  
Minister for Social and Labor Affairs Sayed Ekramuddin Masoumi  
Minister of Youth Affairs Amena Afzali  
Minister of Martyrs and Disabled Sidiqa Balkhi was named to the Afghan Senate in December

14. (C) Ministers were removed - most voluntarily - for several reasons, including shifting political alliances, the consolidation of Ministries, and not meeting the basic constitutional requirements for being Minister (either with respect to age or having only Afghan citizenship). Foreign Minister Abdullah and Karzai had been moving apart for some time, but it is unclear if there was a final reason for his removal. Abdullah was offered other Cabinet positions (including Commerce) in place of MFA, but declined. He was the most prominent Panjshiri in the Cabinet and his ouster may have been the source of reports that VP Massoud complained to Karzai that there were not enough Panjshiris in the Cabinet. The "promotion" of Minister Arsala to Senior Minister was a face-saving move. Arsala was widely disliked in Parliament and an absentee Minister of Commerce (choosing to remain in his former Vice Presidential suite in the Prime Minister's compound), making his confirmation unlikely. Massouda Jalal failed to establish a domestic political base either within the Presidency or other sources, and her removal was widely expected.

15. (SBU) While there were reports for weeks that the number of Ministries would be reduced, only two Ministries were consolidated during this process -- the Ministry of Youth was absorbed into the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Disabled and Martyrs added to the Ministry of Social Affairs. More ambitious streamlining plans were reportedly cut off due to the political need to maintain positions for key allies and ethnic balance. For the same reason, Parliament is not expected to clamor for the consolidation of more Ministries. Both of the eliminated Ministries were led by women, leaving only one woman in the Cabinet.

#### Confirmation by Parliament

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16. (SBU) Action on the Cabinet now moves to the lower house of Parliament, the Wolesi Jirga (WJ). In order to expedite the approval of the Cabinet, the WJ has decided to have each Minister deliver a 20-minute speech to the entire house, then answer one question from each of the 18 committees in the WJ.

The Wolesi Jirga will vote to confirm each Minister individually by secret ballot. Parliament hopes to review two or three Ministers a day, but given the slow pace of previous activity, this is an ambitious plan. In any case, the Cabinet review process could take several weeks to complete.

¶17. (C) The reaction of Parliament to the new Cabinet list is unclear. Parliament has been out of session for a week for the Afghan New Year holiday, and members will not reconvene before March 25. While most members of Parliament, including very senior members, have stated publicly that they intend to base decisions on the Ministers' qualifications, not ethnicity (for example, Rabbani told POLOFFs, "we are not choosing a mullah or a tribal elder, we are choosing Ministers"), how close they will hold to that line remains in question. Speaker Qanooni, according to unconfirmed reports, was displeased with the makeup of the Cabinet and unhappy that he had not been consulted on its composition beforehand. In addition, the two contested prior votes about the confirmation of the Cabinet - whether they should be approved individually or as a group, and whether votes on ministers should be open or secret - both went against the position the Karzai administration lobbied hard for. Each of the established nominated Ministers has both friends and enemies in Parliament. Whether MPs will seek to make an example of certain Ministers to demonstrate their displeasure with the Karzai administration or will not seek to make too many changes in the interest of unity remains to be seen.

#### Brief Biographies of New Ministers

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¶18. (U) Dr. Rangeen Dadfar Spanta - MFA  
Dr. Spanta has been Presidential Advisor on International Affairs since 2004. Originally from Herat, Dr. Spanta was a professor at Kabul University before seeking asylum in Germany at the beginning of the communist era. After working as a professor at the University of Aachen, he participated in the Bonn Agreement negotiations and later returned to Afghanistan. Dr. Spanta speaks fluent German and modest English.

¶19. (C) While POLOffs have found him a pleasant and competent interlocutor, some within the international community have begun to raise questions about how effective he will be as Minister. With only average English, he has a tough act to follow in succeeding the polished and media-savvy Abdullah, and he may find managing the Ministry itself a challenge, since the replacement of Abdullah came as a surprise to MFA staff themselves. Dr. Spanta worked closely with Polcouns on human rights and transitional justice issues and espoused progressive views on those issues.

¶10. (SBU) Dr. Mohammad Haidar Reza - Minister of Commerce  
Currently Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Administration, Dr. Reza is known to the Embassy for his participation in the GoA Budget Committee and his organization of the MFA-hosted December 2005 Regional Economic Cooperation Conference. A former AFS exchange student in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Reza completed medical school at Kabul University in the late 1970s. Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, he served as the Swedish Committee coordinator in northern Takhar province and later as the head of the Afghan Red Crescent Society from 1995-96. After a number of years in hiding following the Taliban's rise to power, and serving as Ahmad Shah Massoud's personal physician, Reza left Afghanistan to work with the ICRC in Geneva, Iraq and Yugoslavia. He returned in February 2002 to began work with the Foreign Ministry on budget, staffing and logistics issues.

¶11. (C) Reza is considered competent, honest and self-effacing and is not anticipated to face significant parliamentary resistance to his appointment. He arrives at a Commerce Ministry whose portfolio has been expanded to include the "Industries" portion of the former Ministry of Mines and Industries. This will give him a stake in the

politically sensitive state-owned enterprise privatization debate. Donors concerned at the Commerce Ministry's manifest lack of capacity in dealing with its core responsibilities of trade facilitation, standards promotion and WTO accession, have long hoped for a more activist Minister than Arsala and for a house cleaning of Deputy Ministers (Zia and Sharifi) whose free-market credentials are suspect and senior advisors (Hakiki) viewed as incompetent. It remains to be seen whether Reza has the drive and organizational instinct for the jugular needed to revive this critical line economic Ministry.

¶12. (SBU) Dr. Soraya Rahim Sabrang - Minister of Women's Affairs

Dr. Sabrang was Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs for Professional Affairs (technical deputy) under Habiba Sorabi (2003-2004). Dr. Sabrang is a medical doctor who graduated from Kabul Medical University. She lived many years as a refugee in Germany, and her family still lives there. After leaving MOWA, she began working for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. Dr. Sabrang is viewed favorably by the international community, who uniformly describe her as a committed women's activist.

¶13. (SBU) Gul Hussein Ahmad - Minister of Transport

Mr. Ahmad is currently the Afghan Consul General in Mumbai, where he was well and favorably known to Polcouns (then the US CG in Mumbai). Originally from Mazar-e Sharif, where he was a teacher, Ahmad also worked in the Embassy in New Delhi. He speaks comfortable English.

¶14. (SBU) Ehsan Zia - Minister of Rural Development

Mr. Zia, a Tajik from Kabul, has been Deputy Minister of Programs at MRRD for the past few years. Prior to MRRD, Zia worked for the Norwegian Committee in Peshawar, Pakistan. He has Master's Degree in Post-War Reconstruction from York University in the UK. He is generally well-regarded and is perceived as having been groomed for this position by outgoing Minister Atmar.

¶15. (SBU) Engineer Ibrahim Adel - Minister of Mines

Engineer Adel, a Hazara, is the current Deputy Minister of Mines. He is a long-term professional employee of the Ministry, formerly managing mines in northern Afghanistan and the Kabul region. He was educated under the Soviet system, but was imprisoned by the Communists. Embassy Natural Resources Advisor has known Adel since he was a student and describes him as competent, not corrupt, and committed to managing the Ministry effectively.

¶16. (SBU) Ustad Akbar Akbar - Minister of Refugees

Ustad Akbar, a Pashtun from Khost, was reportedly suggested to Karzai for this position by Sayyaf. Post has received contradictory information about his employment and education, but Akbar was a refugee in Pakistan and his family still lives there.

NORLAND